

Message Text

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43

ACTION EUR-08

INFO OCT-01 SS-14 ISO-00 NSC-05 NSCE-00 INR-05 CIAE-00

PM-03 L-01 SP-02 SAM-01 EURE-00 /040 W

----- 121663

P R 091700Z FEB 76

FM AMEMBASSY ATHENS

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 2588

INFO USMISSION NATO

USCINCEUR

CINCUSNAVEUR

CINCUSAFE RAMSTEIN

USNMR SHAPE

SECDEF WASHDC

C O N F I D E N T I A L ATHENS 1247

LIMDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: MARR NATO GR

SUBJ: STATUS OF NATO AIR WEAPONS TRAINING CENTER (NAWTC)

AT TYMBAKION: DISCUSSION WITH AVEROFF

REF NATO 626

1. BY CHANCE, OVER THE WEEKEND, I SAW MINISTER OF DEFENSE AVEROFF AT A SOCIAL FUNCTION AND HAD A PRIVATE, INFORMAL CONVERSATION WITH HIM ABOUT OUR CURRENT BILATERAL BASE NEGOTIATIONS TAKING PLACE IN ATHENS AND OTHER MATTERS, INCLUDING THE STATUS OF THE NATO AIR WEAPONS TRAINING CENTER (NAWTC) AT TYMBAKION. AVEROFF AND I SLID VERY NATURALLY AND EASILY DURING OUR CONVERSATION INTO A DISCUSSION OF TYMBAKION, AND WHILE I MADE NO ATTEMPT TO PORTRAY MY REMARKS TO HIM AS AN OFFICIAL USG DEMARCHE ON THE MATTER I WAS ABLE -- HAVING IN MIND THE CONTENTS OF REFTEL RECEIVED FRIDAY MORNING -- TO REGISTER OUR IMPORTANT CONCERNS AS REFLECTED IN THAT MESSAGE.

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2. AVEROFF WAS SOMEWHAT DISCOMFITED AND SEEMED TO BE TRYING TO CLIMB DOWN -- AT LEAST PARTLY -- FROM HIS EARLIER POSITION AS EXPRESSED IN THE GREEK PARLIAMENT. HE DEFENDED THE REMARKS HE MADE IN THE PARLIAMENT. RECALLING THAT NATO AND US MILITARY FACILITIES LOCATED IN CRETE HAVE BEEN UNDER SUSTAINED, HEAVY POLITICAL AND PUBLIC ATTACK IN GREECE, AVEROFF SAID THAT THE GOG HAD DECIDED TO BE PREPARED TO "SACRIFICE " THE PLANNED NATO CENTER AT TYMBAKION IF NECESSARY TO "SAVE" THE NATO AND USG FACILITIES AT SOUDA BAY, NAMFI AND IRAKLION (GOURNES). (COMMENT: I GOT THE IMPRESSION THAT BY "GOG" AVEROFF MEANT HE HAD TOUCHED BASE WITH PRIME MINISTER CARAMANLIS AND PERHAPS ONE OR TWO OTHER SENIOR GREEK GOVERNMENT CIVILIAN OR MILITARY OFFICIALS, BUT THAT THE BASIC DECISION TO "SACRIFICE" TYMBAKION, IF NECESSARY, WAS HIS.)

3. AVEROFF AND I DISCUSSED IN A GENERAL WAY THE VARIOUS CONSIDERATIONS AFFECTING THE TYMBAKION PROBLEM, AND AVEROFF INDICATED HE HOPED THE MATTER COULD REMAIN QUIESCENT FOR THE PRESENT. HE SAID HE DID NOT EXCLUDE -- DEPENDING ON DEVELOPMENTS CONCERNING CYPRUS AND GREECE'S CLARIFYING RELATIONSHIP WITH THE US AND NATO -- THAT IT WOULD BE POSSIBLE TO RESUME THE DEVELOPMENT OF NAWTC AT TYMBAKION AS A NATO FACILITY. HOWEVER, IF A FINAL AND IRREVOCABLE DECISION WERE FORCED ON GREECE NOW, THEN THE FACILITY WOULD HAVE TO BE TERMINATED. IN THAT EVENT, AVEROFF SAID -- IN RESPONSE TO MY QUESTION -- GREECE WOULD MAKE APPROPRIATE REIMBURSEMENTS IF THE PROJECT COULD NOT BE CONTINUED FOR THE PURPOSE FOR WHICH FUNDING HAD BEEN PROVIDED.

4. I ASKED AVEROFF IF THE GOG HAD SENT INSTRUCTIONS TO ITS REPRESENTATIVES AT NATO TO DISCUSS THE MATTER, AND HE SAID NO, NOT YET. HE INDICATED THAT HE AND SEVERAL OF HIS CLOSE COLLABORATORS IN THE GOG WERE STILL WEIGHING THE BEST WAY TO PROCEED. HE THOUGHT THEY WOULD REACH A DECISION SOON AND INDICATED THAT THEREAFTER SOME INSTRUCTIONS OR GUIDANCE WOULD BE SENT TO THE

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GREEK REPRESENTATIVES AT NATO AS TO HOW TO DEAL WITH THIS PROBLEM.

5. OUR CONVERSATION ENDED WITH MY EXPRESSING ONCE AGAIN OUR CONCERN ABOUT THIS PROBLEM AND OUR WILLINGNESS TO CONSULT FURTHER ABOUT IT AT ANY TIME IN AN EFFORT TO TRY AND FIND A MUTUALLY SATISFACTORY SOLUTION.

6. COMMENT: AVEROFF AND THE GOG ARE CLEARLY EMBARRASSED ABOUT THIS MATTER AND HOPE TO FIND SOME DIGNIFIED AND SUBSTANTIVELY SATISFACTORY WAY OUT OF IT. IF WE CAN, I THINK WE SHOULD ALLOW THEM TIME TO DO SO. IN MY OPINION, WE HAVE NOT NECESSARILY LOST THE TYMBAKION NAWTC, AND IF IT EVENTUALLY TURNS OUT TO BE A LOST CAUSE I AM CONFIDENT THAT THE GREEK GOVERNMENT WILL MAKE APPROPRIATE REIMBURSEMENTS. I SHOULD NOT THINK -- IN THE LIGHT OF MY CONVERSATION WITH AVEROFF AND OUR EARLIER DISCUSSION OF THE MATTER AT THE FOREIGN MINISTRY -- THAT WE NEED TO TAKE ANY ADDITIONAL INITIATIVE HERE ON THIS SUBJECT FOR THE TIME BEING. I ALSO AGREE WITH THE VIEW EXPRESSED IN THE FINAL PARAGRAPH OF REFTTEL THAT USNATO SHOULD NOT TAKE ANY FURTHER ACTION AT THIS STAGE BEYOND THE KIND OF PERIODIC AND LOW-KEY, DISCREET INQUIRIES THAT THEY HAVE INITIATED. KUBISCH

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: Z
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: MILITARY TRAINING, MILITARY BASES, NEGOTIATIONS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 09 FEB 1976
Decaption Date: 28 MAY 2004
Decaption Note: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: MartinML
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1976ATHENS01247
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D760048-1091
From: ATHENS
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1976/newtext/t19760270/aaaacizy.tel
Line Count: 132
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ACTION EUR
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: LIMDIS
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 3
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: LIMDIS
Reference: n/a
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: MartinML
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 07 APR 2004
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <07 APR 2004 by CollinP0>; APPROVED <28 JUL 2004 by MartinML>
Review Markings:

Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
04 MAY 2006

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: STATUS OF NATO AIR WEAPONS TRAINING CENTER (NAWTC) AT TYMBAKION: DISCUSSION WITH AVEROFF
TAGS: MARR, GR, US, NATO
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 04 MAY 2006